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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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RAID NETS EIGHTEEN DUCK POACHERS IN CALIFORNIA

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay today praised California Fish and Game Department agents for their coordinated action with Federal game management agents last week in apprehending a ring of 18 Sacramento Valley residents charged with illegally shooting and selling wild ducks.

A sweeping raid, three years in the making, by Federal and State game agents on the morning of March 1, was described as the largest mass apprehension of market hunters in California's history. The case involved 4,760 ducks, as well as 66 wild geese.

The raid, which resulted also in the arrests of restaurant owners who purchased and served the illegal ducks, was supervised by Clinton G. Fairchild, United States Game Management Agent for the Sacramento area; Robert D. Montgomery, Regional Manager for the California Department of Fish and Game; and Hugh H. Worcester, United States Game Management Agent for the San Francisco area.

A joint statement by Leo Laythe, Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director, and Seth Gordon, Director of California's Fish and Game Department, was wholeheartedly indorsed by Secretary McKay.

"The necessity for mass apprehension of persons charged with illegally killing, possessing, and marketing wild ducks and geese," the statement declared, "and of persons who have been serving this game for profit in their restaurants, is a shocking and disturbing occurrence which should arouse everyone interested in the conservation of California's wildlife resources.

"Apprehended on evidence collected meticulously and with great effort by law enforcement personnel of both the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the California Department of Fish and Game, these people can expect no mercy from us, whether they move in high or low social circles.

"The Federal and State laws are crystal clear against market hunting and professional game bootlegging. The number of people charged with violation of these laws and the number of ducks and geese presented as evidence of violations should serve as a warning (to any others in the State who contemplate similar activity) that our State and Federal agents mean business in their efforts to wipe out these nefarious practices."

Secretary McKay pointed out that since wild ducks and geese are migratory birds, moving across international borders and from State to State in their spring and fall flights, their welfare is the concern of both Federal and State conservation agencies.

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